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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY 21 1985

SECRET

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM S/S

To: The Secretary

Thru: P - Mr. Armacost MA

From: EAP - Paul Wolfowitz PW

Subject: Newsweek Asserts US favors Early Philippine Election

Newsweek magazine has carried an article alleging that CIA Director Casey during his meeting with President Marcos in Manila May 9 urged that the Presidential election now scheduled for 1987 be held earlier (Tab A).

[redacted]

The idea of advancing the Presidential election to coincide with scheduled local elections in 1986 or even earlier is, however, a hot item of political discussion in the Philippines. [redacted] who fear that the 1987 Presidential election could be heavily influenced by likely KBL party setbacks in the 1986 local elections, favor such a course. The KBL launched a trial ballon last week for synchronized elections. Marcos has opposed the idea publicly but has left room for maneuvering. The opposition likes the idea, and Salvador Laurel's UNIDO coalition has officially supported moving both elections up to late 1985 or early 1986.

We see certain advantages in an early Presidential election, which if credible, could help clear the air and create a government with greater public confidence. However, Ambassador Bosworth has been carefully noncommital when approached on the idea. Always ready to see an American hand in political developments, the Manila rumor mill has nonetheless speculated that the US is behind the early election idea. The Casey visit, coming at a time when speculation was at its height, seems to have reinforced such rumors.

We have issued press guidance to the effect that the USG has not taken a position on this issue and has made no proposals or suggestions regarding the timing of elections.

Attachment:
Tab A - Newsweek article
Tab B - EAP Press Guidance, May 21, 1985

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PRTN 163-1343

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tral square and marched into San Rafael Oriente's town hall. Seizing Arévalo, they burned the town's documents and blew up the electrical transformer and the water pump. After his captors released him with the ransom message—and a warning that he should not return to his office—Arévalo hurried back to his village. He gathered his family, packed his belongings, took a bath—and left San Rafael Oriente without saying goodbye to anyone. Some villagers regretted their mayor's forced departure. "It's a loss for us," said Francisco Ayala, an old man in a cowboy hat. "How are we going to get the electrical and water services fixed?"

In the nearby village of Santa Elena, Mayor Diomedes Lozano has refused to take office. "There weren't any bad words," says his brother Noé, who overheard the conversation the mayor had with guerrillas who came to his house. "They just asked him face to face not to take up his job." Fearing for his life, Lozano, 45, complied. Now Santa Elena has no mayor. "We are governed by the law of whoever is strongest," said a village schoolteacher who added: "We sympathize with the mayor. We don't want to force him to take office if he could be killed."

Two weeks ago the rebels came to the coffee-growing town of Tecapán, in the shadow of the Tecapa volcano. They told Nelson Ayala, 28, the newly elected mayor, that they would kill his entire family unless he agreed to meet them at a nearby natural spring. Ayala, a farmer with a reputation as a political moderate, went to the clandestine rendezvous. He has not been seen since. Thoroughly terrorized, all of Tecapán's remaining municipal employees fled to San Salvador for safety. Other mayors have gotten the message. "If they tell me to close the office, I'll close it," says Tomás Erasmo Campos, 38, mayor of El Tránsito, an important cotton town in San Miguel department. "If they want to burn it down, I won't stop them."

Loss of Initiative: Some officials in San Salvador interpret the new campaign of terror as a proof that the rebels have lost ground politically and militarily. The guerrillas have not scored a significant military gain since July 1984, when they seized the Cerrón Grande dam in Chalatenango department and briefly held it until routed by Salvadoran troops. "The new guerrilla tactics show that they no longer have the military initiative," says Maj. Carlos Aviles, a Salvadoran military spokesman. "They aren't capable of attacking large Army units like before. They have reverted to the old 1977 terrorist stage of kidnappings and assassinations." That may well be the case. But the rebels have also shown they still can cause chaos in the countryside—and that they have little intention of talking peace with Duarte.

ANGUS DENING with LIZ BALMASEDA and RON LORTEAU in San Salvador

The president and First Lady: Ailing, but certain he will survive until the next election

THE PHILIPPINES

Casey: A Message for Marcos

CIA Director William Casey is back from a three-day visit to the Philippines. NEWSWEEK has learned that Casey talked with President Ferdinand Marcos about the idea of a new presidential election. The message to Marcos was clear: Washington was pushing for some form of early test at the polls.

In reply, a senior Philippine official let it be known that Marcos might be willing to put his job on the line well before his six-year term expires in 1987. Senior opposition leaders called for an election "to defuse the explosive situation of the country today and restore real democracy." Marcos said he would oppose holding a presidential vote to coincide with gubernatorial and mayoral elections next January. He called the idea "a deceitful way of cutting . . . the term of the president." Whether he could withstand the U.S. pressure was uncertain.

NEWSWEEK has learned that in an unpublicized meeting at Malacañang Palace, the American intelligence chief suggested that an early election could help ease the country's political, security and economic crises. He raised some points designed to encourage Marcos to rethink his objections. Among them was the opinion that an election could help rebuild confidence in the country's political machinery and woo potential investors to repair its devastated economy. A free and open election would restore political normalcy in the country, Casey reportedly said, and thereby reduce the attraction of the communist New People's Army and other radical groups.

Casey's primary mission, according to sources, was to [illegible] the nation's communist insurgency. But Casey sounded out several opposition leaders as to whether a vote would "cool the insurgency down"; according to one Marcos critic, he was told it would. And while insisting that the United States was not pressuring Marcos, senior U.S. diplomats in Manila asked at least one party leader whether the opposition could be ready for a vote this year.

Incapacitation: According to Malacañang sources, the CIA director also discussed Marcos's failing health and the possibility of a chaotic succession struggle. Under a new constitutional amendment, the vice president would succeed the president in the event of resignation, death or incapacitation. But that office will not be filled until the 1987 elections. Sources told NEWSWEEK that, after suggesting that the country might need a vice president sooner rather than later, Casey asked—"with due respect"—whether Marcos felt certain he would survive until the next presidential vote. The 67-year-old Marcos, who suffers from a kidney disease, said "yes."

Filipinos who believe that Marcos may support the idea of an early election say he might want to see his wife, Imelda, installed as president or in the vice presidency as his constitutional successor before his health worsens. The president, they say, also knows that there are good reasons for risking an election soon—before the economy deteriorates further or his fractious opposition can regroup. The next move belongs to Marcos—but mounting pressure from his opponents in Washington may force his hand.

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EAP PRESS GUIDANCE Pouch 63-1221 May 21, 1985

PHILIPPINE ELECTION SCHEDULE

Q. Would you comment on the Newsweek story that CIA Director Casey proposed or suggested to President Marcos that early Presidential elections be held in the Philippines?

-- The question of the timing of elections is a matter for decision by the Philippines.

-- The US Government has not taken a position on this issue, and we certainly have made no proposals or suggestions concerning the timing of elections.

Q. But what about CIA Director Casey? Did he or did he not suggest early elections to President Marcos?

A. -- Mr. Casey is a member of the US Government. I refer you to my previous answer.

IF ASKED

Q. What did Mr. Casey talk about with President Marcos?

A. -- If you have questions about the CIA Director you should contact the Agency.

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